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## **LARSON MARKS COLUMBINE ANNIVERSARY WITH REVIEW OF \$150,000 FEDERAL GRANT TO WINDSOR POLICE FOR SCHOOL BASED POLICING**

WINDSOR - U.S. Congressman John B. Larson (CT-01) marked the one-year anniversary of the devastating school violence at Columbine High School in Colorado, by reviewing how a federal grant from the U.S. Department of Justice is helping the Windsor Police Department and Windsor Public Schools prevent disputes between students and disputes between students and teachers, which pose a threat to student safety.

In August 1999, the Windsor Police Department received approximately \$150,000 from the U.S. Department of Justice's (DOJ) Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS) School Based Partnership Program. Funding under this grant program allows law enforcement agencies to work with schools, student representatives, and community- based organizations to address persistent school related crime problems.

Larson stated, "Tragically, the fear of school violence has become all too real for many students. The best way we can attack this problem is by coming together as a community, and realizing that it is our responsibility to help them become productive, well-adjusted members of society. I highly commend the Windsor Police Department and the Windsor Public School System for caring so much about the well-being

of our young people."

According to the grant application it filed with DOJ, the Windsor Police Department determined that school violence is a priority for the school district based on surveys and focus group responses, which were gathered by the Superintendent of Schools. Over 600 members of the community including members of various civic organizations, teachers, parents, students, school administrators, municipal government representatives, and police department personnel were involved in this collection of information.

Windsor Police Chief Kevin Searles stated, "We are very grateful to the Department of Justice for recognizing how determined law enforcement, residents, community leaders, and education officials are to find a way to end school violence. Windsor's partnership program works, quite simply, because so many people care."

Marge Montague, Director of Business Services for Windsor Public Schools, is coordinating the school system's involvement in the program. She attended today's briefing for Congressman Larson and stated, "This program is so valuable to the Windsor Public School System. It has become an essential and integral part of maintaining a safe environment for our children. It works extremely well, and I can't say enough good things about it. Every community should be involved in this partnership program."

Shortly after the shootings in Columbine last year, Larson asked a group of individuals from across the District to listen to the community and advise him on the best plan of action for

addressing school violence. This group was comprised of teachers, students, principals, youth service directors, mental health directors, and attorneys. They traveled to Hartford, East Hampton, and Newington to obtain a cross-section of urban, rural, and suburban views on how to prevent school violence.

Among the issues and/or concerns identified by the group: a lack of knowledge as to what school violence prevention grants are available (Larson created a Grants Coordinator in his Washington, D.C. office in December, 1999); a need to ease the grant application process; improved communication between agencies dealing with youth violence; need to foster relationships between police, business, and community agencies, and the importance of validating what young people have to say.

The group recommended various courses of action to address these issues such as the development of undergraduate teacher training in communication skills, conflict resolution, and mediation; the creation of opportunities for students to share experiences; strengthening the link between mental health services and schools, and offering these services in a less stigmatizing manner.

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